

HR Corner

Live, grow and be rewarded

by Colette Wong



Gary Siu, director of
human resources
Renaissance Harbour
View Hotel Hong
Kong
Photo: Nolly Leung

Five-star employees exude zest and vitality

Employers across the board realise that employees are their best assets and so go to great lengths to build an environment that encourages growth and promotes employee well-being. One such responsible employer is Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong.

Managed by Marriott International, the hotel's management is committed to the satisfaction of both hotel guests and employees, says Gary Siu, director of human resources, Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong.

"Our philosophy is to take good care of our associates so they will in turn look after our guests. We do so by considering associates' needs in every aspect of their work," Mr Siu states.

Second home

To cultivate a home-away-from-home working environment, the hotel has made a point to renovate the employee locker room and purpose-built a sleeping room which is furnished with comfortable bedding so that employees taking an afternoon break can enjoy a relaxing siesta before they return to work. Alternatively, they may take advantage of free corporate membership for workout sessions at a nearby gym, or spend time at the designated computer corner and learning centre at the hotel. Mr Siu emphasises, "The ultimate aim of all this is to help associates enhance their overall well-being."

Along the same lines, the hotel organises a diverse range of leisure activities such as boat trips for employees as well as their families. "This is more than simply saying 'thank you' to our associates," Mr Siu adds. "We extend our gratitude to their loved ones."

Showing appreciation, in Mr Siu's opinion, is essential to fostering a positive and engaging working environment. To this end, the hotel acknowledges excellent work performance by presenting deserving employees with "associate of the quarter" and "associate of the year" awards. The hotel also has in place an innovative "hospitality star award" scheme where employees are invited to nominate peers and supervisors who excel in serving guests or working with others.

"In addition to our long-running annual Marriott associate appreciation week, which is a major event running every May, these initiatives serve to create harmony and cultivate a great sense of team spirit," Mr Siu remarks. "Involving associates in recognition programmes like these also strengthens loyalty and reinforces job ownership, while enhancing transparency in hotel management."

This transparent management methodology is further enhanced via the hotel's open-door policy, which encourages employees to express their opinions to supervisors via direct dialogue, or to the human resources department through face-to-face discussions or written opinion forms.

Employees are also invited to join in regular "GM rap sessions" where Philip Bryson, the hotel's general manager, engages participating employees in frank conversations.

"Mr Bryson insists that everybody in the hotel, including him, is on first name terms with other associates, regardless of position and seniority. This helps to bring people closer to each other," Mr Siu says, adding that the hotel's annual opinion survey also enables department heads to assess departmental performance and to consider employee expectations in their planning.

Rewarding environment

Open communication starts the very first day new recruits report for duty at the hotel. "Our goal is to immerse new associates in the company culture, so that they feel part of the team," Mr Siu explains.

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An "In the beginning" orientation programme is well in place to achieve this. In the three-day programme, issues ranging from the Marriott culture, market position and guest satisfaction requirements to employee benefits are clearly explained.

On-the-job training follows. "In particular, new employees are guided by individual mentors on work and career development," Mr Siu says. After one month, they undergo a one-day follow-up training session, which aims to inculcate the hotel's service philosophy.

After passing their probation periods, new employees return to the training room for a half-day reinforcement training. As they progress, a wealth of training programmes including language classes and advanced customer service workshops help to add value to the job. Higher aspirations are complimented with management training. External training or pursuits of additional academic qualifications are also subsidised.

Mr Siu emphasises that career development is an integral part of the hotel's people policy. As such, the right people who demonstrate the right skills and mentality can expect ample opportunities across the entire spectrum of Marriott International. In fact, employees looking for broader exposure have the possibility of training at other properties under the group. "Everyone, from associates working at the front desk to those in food and beverage, undergoes cross training at our sister hotels," he says.

The hotel recorded a lower staff turnover rate in the first half of 2008 than over the same period last year. In cases where employees indicate their desire to leave the hotel to pursue other options, the human resources department tries to assist them by assessing their skills and interests and determining whether they can move to alternative roles within the hotel or at other Marriott properties.

Salient points

- Comprehensive benefits and facilities enhance associate well-being
- Open-door policy encourages frank communication
- Career development an important retention tool
- Awards acknowledge hard work and service excellence

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